

Perceptual Vision Ortho-k Behavioural Optometrists Myopia Prevention Team Sydney

Perceptual Vision a Major Player in a Winning Team

Perceptual Vision a Major Player in a Winning Team Some say that keeping your eye on the ball is all that's required to be a good athlete. But during the last three decades both sports trainers and vision experts, like Australian behavioural optometrists Gary Rodney and Jacqueline Gattegno from Smart Vision Optometry, have become increasingly aware that while that fixed focus is definitely necessary, vision plays a far bigger role in star-level athletic performance than what initially meets the eye.

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Keeping Your Eye on the Ball is Not Enough According to Rodney and Gattegno the key to top performance on the sports field lies in perceptual vision, and not just in the good eyesight determined by the Snellen charts of letters and numbers used in standard eye tests. Nor is perceptual vision purely about "keeping your eye on the ball".

Instead it involves how athletes perceive, interpret and make sense of what they see, and how they process and respond to the "information" of the ball and its immediate surroundings. Any shortfalls in these areas of perceptual viewing can impact considerably on athletic performance levels if ignored.

"It's not that people can't take part in sport with perceptual vision problems. And they may even perform well. But there's a good chance they will perform better, and be more committed to their involvement in the game, if those perceptual shortcomings are addressed," Rodney, the founder of Smart Vision in Sydney, said.

How Sports Training Works Rodney said players' ability to keep their eye on the ball remains vital, but they also need to be able to judge where it is; track where it is going; and have a good idea of how fast it will get there, in order to time their response. And they also have to be aware of the environment in which the ball is travelling and any activities occurring which might affect their choice of how to respond. This involved a wide range of visual functions beyond dynamic vision.

He said perceptual vision can be improved using state of the art technology blended with the simple exercise that vision therapy provides. Programmes can be specially tailored to fit individual athletes and the sports they take part in, each of which have their own needs. These include hand-eye, eye-body and eye-foot coordination which power bodily movements as a response (tennis), excellent peripheral awareness of actions taking around them (team games) and other vision connected factors like reaction time, visual alignment, balance and depth perception.

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Support for Sports Vision Training Growing According to Rodney, vision therapy, which tweaks any shortcomings in perceptual vision, is increasingly winning support from professional coaches and trainers operating at everything from Olympic level to those moulding the Olympic and national sports stars of tomorrow on today's school and public fields. It's also winning the attention of parents wanting to understand whether vision issues are behind why their children are avoiding sporting activities.

It's also attracting the attention of researchers, who are increasingly looking at the concept of perceptual vision and its connection to performance on the field. This has resulted in the publication of several studies and papers on both the prevalence of perceptual shortcomings in players, the therapy and its level of success.

Research Results These have led to wide-ranging conclusions, including statistics showing that athletes taking the medals at Junior Olympic and Olympic levels sported the best overall vision. At the same time, as many as one out of three of those who didn't make the podium had less than perfect eyesight, and one in four scored lower when screened for depth of vision and eye-hand coordination. And a relatively small section even battled with keeping their eye on the ball.

Other studies and tests have shown vision training to produce better results, particularly in team games and those involving bats and balls. One such study, where cricketers were grouped separately for cricket and vision training, showed those given the vision training showed greater performance improvement than the others. Another showed 30% improvement in baseball batting averages after vision training.

Smart Vision Optometry clinics in Sydney focus on providing eye care for a number of vision problems with particular focus on children and myopia, and on determining the best treatment for each case. Visit the Smart Vision website: [Optometrists Sydney: Optometry Services For Children and Adults | Smart Vision](#) to find more information provided by the Smart Vision behavioural optometrists and for information on the precautions applied during COVID-19.

Click here to book an appointment online or Call the Bondi clinic on (02) 9365 5047, or the Mosman clinic on (02) 9969 1600.

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